

**Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001  
Environmental Assessment  
South River Field Office  
EA # OR-105-01-01**

**Smoke Screen Commercial Thinning  
Decision Documentation**  
Prepared: December 20, 2004

**Decision:**

It is my decision to offer the Smoke Screen Commercial Thinning timber sale, continuing implementation of Alternative 2 described in the Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001 EA (pp. 4-9). This decision authorizes commercial thinning and density management on three units located in Section 3, T. 30 S., R. 9 W., W.M.

Configuration of the units offered for sale may differ slightly from those depicted in Appendix A of the EA, as a consequence of minor adjustments made during final layout to address resource conditions, concerns or objectives identified on the ground. Final road lengths and locations may also vary slightly for similar reasons. Any modifications made are consistent with the original proposal and analysis, however, and do not reflect new information or constitute effects beyond the scope of those addressed in the EA.

Approximately 64 acres of General Forest Management Area will be thinned. This will yield an estimated 954 thousand board feet (MBF) of timber which is chargeable toward the annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the Roseburg District. Density management in 14 acres of Riparian Reserves will yield approximately 218 MBF of timber that is not chargeable toward the ASQ. As noted in the EA (p. 4-5), trees to be cut would come primarily from the suppressed and intermediate crown classes, although a limited number of dominant and co-dominant trees will also be cut to meet density objectives. All Pacific yew trees are reserved from cutting under timber sale contract provisions. It is also anticipated that additional volume will be modified into the sale resulting from the cutting of individual trees to provide tailhold trees and guyline anchors, clear yarding corridors, and provide safe working space at landings.

Access will be provided by existing roads, supplemented by temporary and operator optional spur roads.

Renovation to approximately 0.85 miles (44+60 Sta.) of BLM Road No. 30-9-3.0 will include installation of additional drainage structures (cross-drain culverts and drainage dips) and additional aggregate surfacing. This renovation will require removal of individual trees along the road to provide turnouts and a safe line-of-sight for traffic on the road.

Approximately 0.58 miles of non-system roads (Spurs 1, 2 and 3) will be renovated as temporary roads, but will not be surfaced. One temporary spur (Spur 5) 0.14 miles (7+45 Sta.), and one optional operator spur (Spur 4) of 0.13 miles (7+00 Sta.) are also designated as unsurfaced roads. The intent is to renovate or construct, use, and then decommission these unsurfaced roads in the same dry season. If circumstances, such as extended fire closure, preclude this objective the BLM will require winterization and closure of the roads, and will decommission the roads upon completion of thinning and density management operations the following summer.

Surveys were conducted for Special Status botanical species identified in the EA (p. 20). No Kincaid's lupine (Federally-threatened) or other Special Status species (Bureau Sensitive or Bureau Assessment) were located which would be affected by the commercial thinning.

The 2004 *Record of Decision to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines* removed protection for species previously covered under the Survey and Manage program. Species determined to qualify were placed in the BLM Special Status Species Program. Of those species previously designated under Survey and Manage and addressed in the EA (p. 19), only the Oregon shoulderband snail (*Helminthoglypta hertleini*) is designated under the Special Status Species Program, and is classified as a Bureau Sensitive species. An evaluation determined that there was no suitable habitat for the snail in the Smoke Screen Commercial Thinning project area (EA, p. 20). No other Special Status Species were identified which would be potentially affected.

In view of habitat evaluation and the negative results of species surveys, it is considered unlikely that any Special Status species would be affected by the Smoke Screen Commercial Thinning project or that the thinning would be likely to contribute to the need to list any species as threatened or endangered.

In order to reduce the likelihood of introducing or spreading noxious weeds into the project area, contract provisions will require that, with the exception of logging trucks, all logging and road construction equipment be pressure washed or steam cleaned prior to being moved into the sale area, or at any time when the equipment is removed from the area and later returned.

The Smoke Screen project area is located within the Bingham 7<sup>th</sup>-field watershed. Thinning units and areas astride the haul route are infested with Port-Orford-cedar root disease, with both healthy and infected trees observed throughout. Infected Port-Orford-cedar is also present in downstream areas of the majority of drainages in the project area.

On May 10, 2004, the *Record of Decision for Management of Port-Orford-Cedar in Southwest Oregon* (POC ROD) was signed, amending the Roseburg District ROD/RMP. The POC ROD and the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (POC FSEIS) supporting it address effects of forest management practices and activities on the spread of Port-Orford-cedar root disease, caused by *Phytophthora lateralis*. This does not constitute new information, however, as the Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001 analysis previously identified and considered relevant factors addressed by the POC FSEIS and proposed mitigation consistent with management direction contained in the POC ROD.

The POC ROD provides management direction for assessing risk and controlling spread of the disease, in order to maintain Port-Orford-cedar as an integral component of the vegetative communities of which it is a part. The risk key contained in the POC ROD is used for sitespecific analysis to assess the need for application of additional management practices. A riskkey assessment of the Smoke Screen Commercial Thinning project indicates that no special mitigation is required.

Although no need for additional mitigation is indicated, measures described in the EA (p. 36-37) will be implemented to further reduce risk of spreading Port-Orford-cedar root disease. These include: equipment washing as previously described; sanitizing water drawn from sources in the sale area for use in for road construction and dust abatement with a solution containing Clorox bleach; restricting road construction and renovation to the dry season (May 15<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup>); restricting hauling on unsurfaced roads to the dry season; removing all merchantable Port-Orford-cedar trees within 20 feet uphill and 50 feet downhill of roads bordering or passing through units or astride haul routes; and decommissioning and blocking unsurfaced roads upon completion of thinning operations.

## **Rationale for the Decision:**

The Roseburg District *Record of Decision/Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP 1995) directs that commercial thinning will be programmed in forest stands allocated to the General Forest Management Area that are less than 80 years of age in order to assure high levels of timber volume production (p. 151). The ROD/RMP (pp. 153-154) also directs that density management be applied within Riparian Reserves to “. . . control stocking, to reestablish and manage stands, to establish and manage desired nonconifer vegetation, and to acquire desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.” Alternative 2, the proposed action, accomplishes these objectives, whereas Alternative 1 will not.

Comments on the EA were received from three organizations and one State governmental agency, and considered in the preparation of this decision. None identified issues or represented information not already considered and addressed in the EA, or which are not addressed in this decision. Following is a summary of some of the comments received, with reference to how and where they are addressed in the Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001 EA.

- The Middle Fork Coquille River is listed as temperature impaired.

This is acknowledged (EA, p. 23). Measures to prevent thinning from contributing to elevated water temperatures are also described, which consist of variable width “no-harvest” buffers designed to retain and maintain direct stream shading immediately above and adjacent to perennial streams (EA, p. 43). In addition, there are no perennial streams in the Smoke Screen project area, so potential effects to summer water temperatures are negligible.

- Withdraw the proposal until the effects of forest management on the spread of Port-Orford-cedar root disease have been analyzed in an EIS.

As previously addressed in this decision, an EIS for the management of Port-Orford-cedar has been completed. The analysis contained in the Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001 EA is consistent with the findings and direction contained in the POC SEIS and POC ROD.

None of the Smoke Screen Commercial Thinning units are located within a Critical Habitat Unit (CHU) designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to aid in the survival and recovery of the northern spotted owl, so there would be no effect on the intended function of any CHU.

As described in the EA (pp. 38-39), thinning will only occur in stands that provide dispersal habitat and limited foraging opportunities for the northern spotted owl. No suitable nesting and roosting habitat will be removed or modified. Although thinning could modify habitat utility in the short term (10-15 years), as canopy closure returns to pre-thinning levels, use of the stands by owls for foraging and dispersal is also expected to return to pre-thinning levels. The BLM has made a determination that the thinning is not likely to adversely affect spotted owls based on the modification of habitat. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination in the FY 2003-2008 Programmatic Biological Opinion (Log No. 1-15-03-F-160).

There will be no disturbance to nesting spotted owls because none of the units are located within 65 yards of any owl activity centers. This is consistent with the findings contained in the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *Reinitiation of consultation regarding modification of disturbance distances* (1-15-04-F-0301).

As noted in the EA (Table 10, p. 18), there is no suitable nesting habitat for marbled murrelets within any of the Smoke Screen Commercial Thinning units, so thinning would not adversely affect marbled murrelets with respect to the modification of suitable habitat. There is no suitable nesting habitat within 100 yards of any of the units, so the potential for disturbance is considered unlikely and no Daily Operational Restrictions are required between April 1 and August 5.

Upstream migration by the Federally-threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon and Oregon Coast steelhead trout is blocked by a series of waterfalls located more than eight miles downstream of the sale area. The limits of Essential Fish Habitat are defined by the same waterfalls. The only potential effects to fish and Essential Fish Habitat would be associated with sediment. Analysis determined that the project would have "No Effect." As described in the EA (p. 42), ". . . there are no identifiable sources of sediment potentially great enough, nor realistic pathways by which sediments would be transported far enough downstream . . ." to affect coho salmon or Essential Fish Habitat. This is because "no-harvest" stream buffers would filter out any overland flow of sediment-laden water, road renovation and construction would be restricted to the dry season and employ sediment control practices, and timber hauling would be restricted to the dry season where temporary, unsurfaced roads are employed. Any sediment which might be generated would remain localized and be short-term in duration.

## Monitoring:

Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with provisions contained in the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (p. 84, 190, 193, & 195-199). Monitoring efforts will consider the following resources: Riparian Reserves; Matrix; Water and Soils; Wildlife Habitat; Fish Habitat; and Special Status Species Habitat.

## Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 - Administrative Remedies, protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the Decision Notice in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon.

43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (b) states that: "Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision." This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail or facsimile protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Roseburg District Office will be accepted.

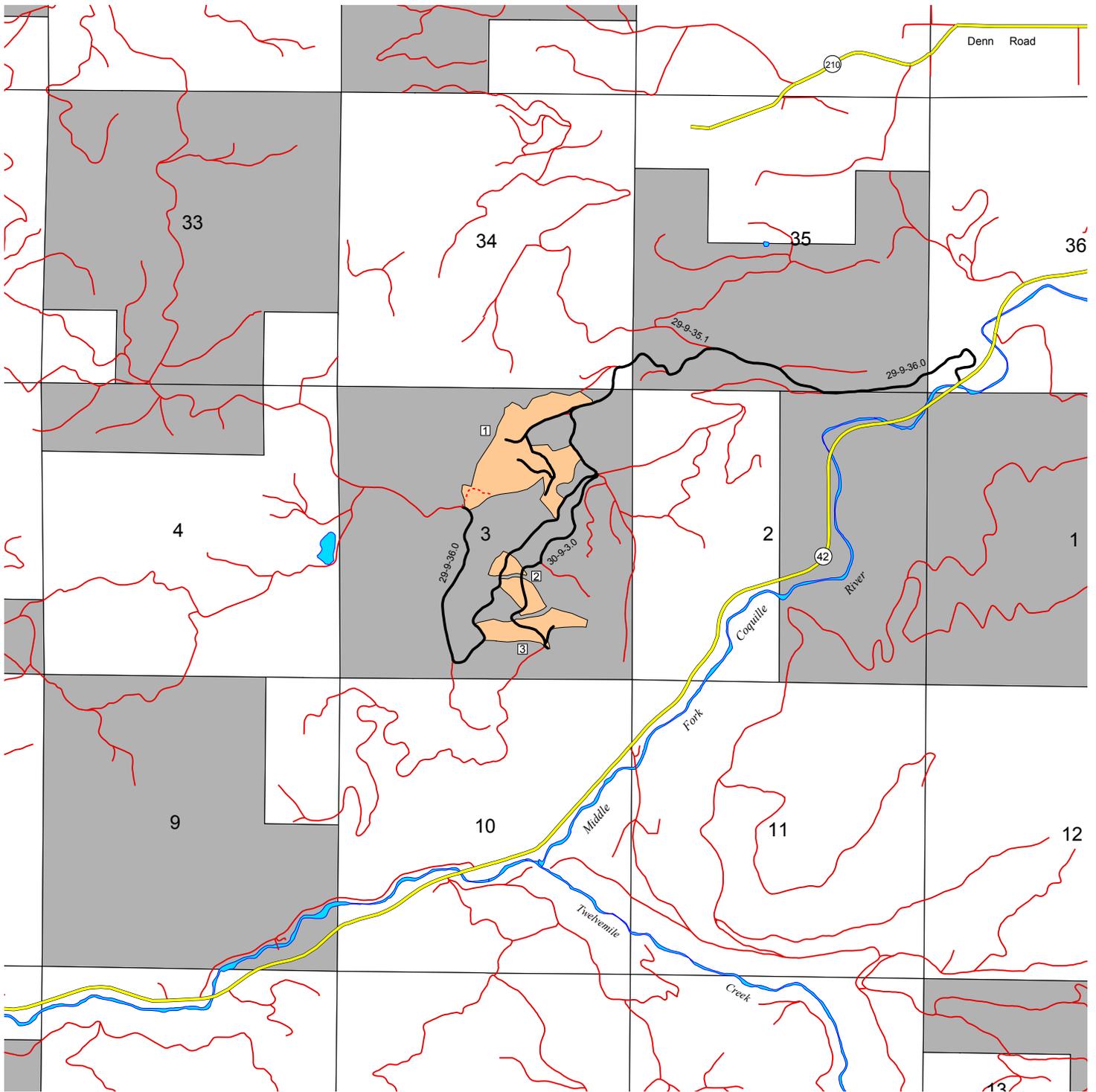
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William S Haigh  
Field Manager  
South River Field Office

Date

# SMOKE SCREEN

## Commercial Thinning



0  1 Miles

T30S, R9W

Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR.

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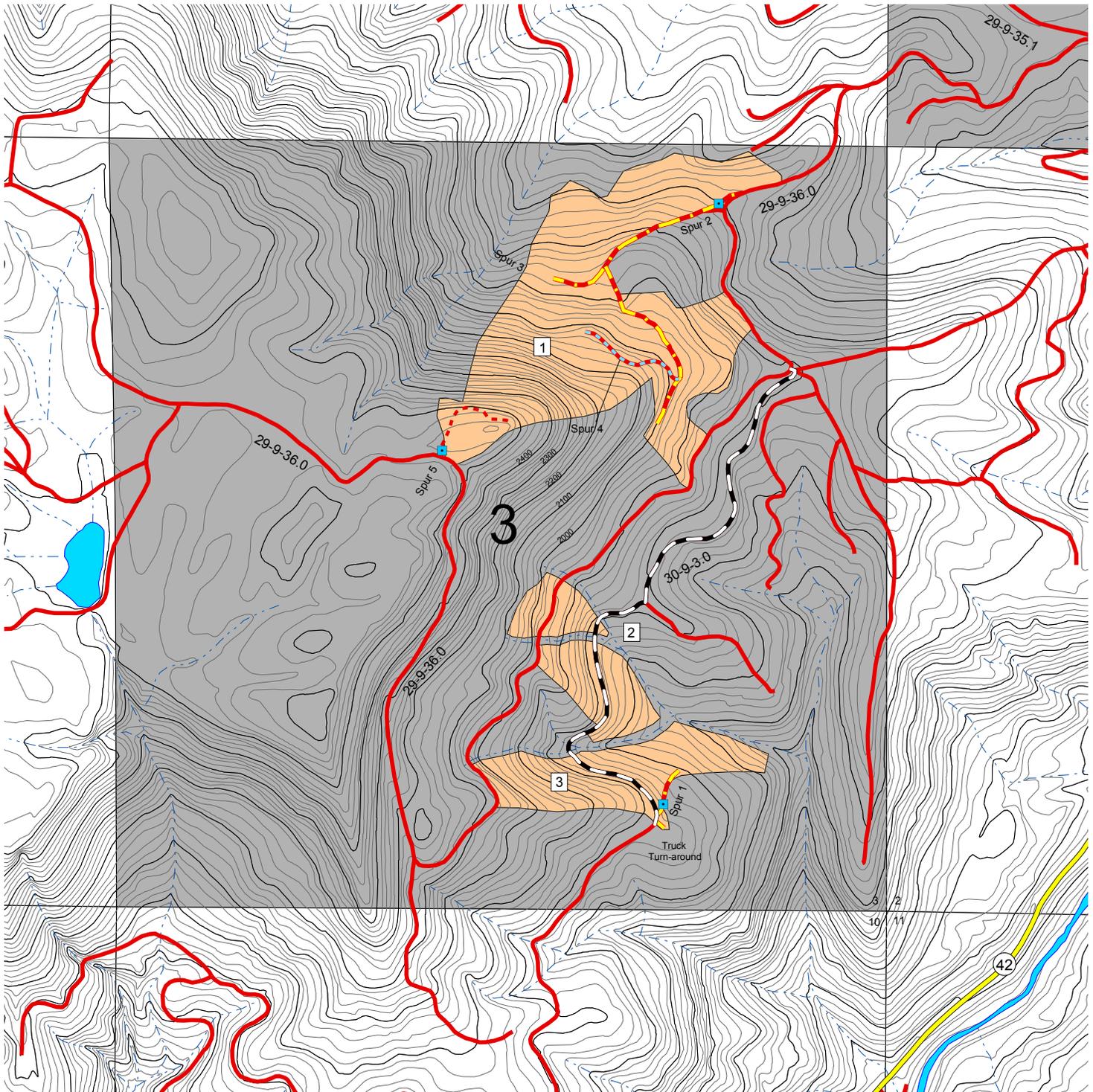


-  Paved Highway
-  Existing Road
-  Haul Route
-  Road to be Constructed

-  Thinning Area
-  BLM (O&C) Land
-  Non-BLM Land

# SMOKE SCREEN

Commercial Thinning



T30S, R9W  
 Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR.

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- Construct Roadblock
- State Highway
- Existing Road
- Renovate, Rock
- Renovate, Decommission
- Operator Spur
- Construct, Decommission
- 100' Contour
- 20' Contour
- Stream

- Thinning Area
- BLM (O&C) Land
- Non-BLM Land